

Location and Contact Information

The Desert Experimental Range is operated and maintained by the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS).

The Desert Experimental Range is about a four-hour drive from Provo and two hours from Cedar City, Utah. To reach the Desert Experimental Range from Provo, take Route 15 south to Beaver, Utah, then take State Road 21 west to Minersville, continuing north to Milford. Stay on State Road 21 as it turns west out of town for about 40 more miles, then turn north on an improved gravel road between mile markers 33 and 34. The main gate to the Desert Experimental Range is 2.25 miles from the highway. The headquarters complex is another 0.75 miles from the gate.

For more information:

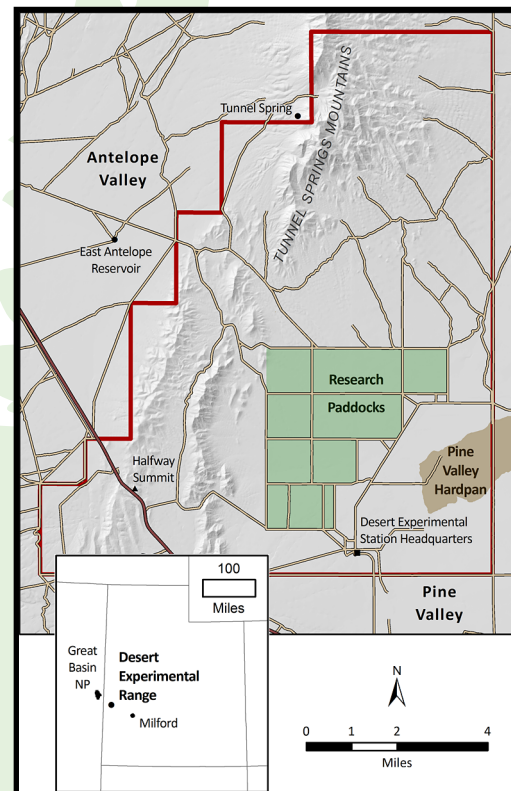
Desert Experimental Range
Rocky Mountain Research Station
Shrub Sciences Laboratory
735 North 500 East
Provo, UT 84606
801-356-5100
www.fs.fed.us/rmrs



Map of the Rocky Mountain Research Station



Map of Desert Experimental Range



Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) is one of seven units within U.S. Forest Service Research and Development. RMRS maintains 12 field laboratories throughout a 12-state territory encompassing parts of the Great Basin, Southwest, Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains.

RMRS administers and conducts research on 14 Experimental Forests and Ranges (EF&R) in seven states. The U.S. Forest Service's EF&R network represents many of the ecosystem types found in the United States and Puerto Rico. Most EF&Rs contain significant acreage and many encompass large experimental study sites that are used to examine the effects of operational-scale treatments such as prescribed burning and forest thinning. RMRS also oversees activities on several hundred Research Natural Areas, which have been set aside to conduct research while conserving biological diversity.

For more information:

Rocky Mountain Research Station
240 West Prospect Road
Fort Collins, CO 80526-2098
970-498-1100

www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
[www.twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/](https://twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/)

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Desert Experimental Range

*An area for the advancement of
natural resource management in
the Great Basin region*



Forest
Service

Rocky Mountain
Research Station

An Outdoor Laboratory With a Unique History

In southwestern Utah, just a few miles from the Nevada border, lies an isolated area that has been used for continuous environmental research for more than 80 years. Known as the Desert Experimental Range, the site has been used for cold-desert rangeland research on grazing, erosion, climate variability, wild animal biology and invasive plant species. Encompassing parts of Pine Valley and the Tunnel Springs Mountains, the Desert Experimental Range is used by researchers, land managers and educators to discover and promote improved strategies for the use and protection of the relatively fragile cold-desert ecosystems that occupy a large part of the western United States.



Great-horned owls are among the many species that live on the Desert Experimental Range.]

Providing Research for the Great Basin Region

The Desert Experimental Range officially dates back to 1933, when President Herbert Hoover's administration set aside 87 square miles site as a place for scientists to study the impact of grazing on salt-desert shrub land. Research conducted here can be applied to much of the Great Basin, a vast, internally drained region that includes almost all of Nevada and parts of Utah, California and Oregon.

As far back as the 1860s, European settlers began using the Great Basin's desert valleys as pasture for domestic livestock. They found that many native grasses and shrubs provided excellent forage, even during winter. Cattle came first to the area,

followed by sheep in the 1880s. Eventually, the number of livestock exceeded what the land could bear. This resulted in serious erosion and long-term damage to many local plant species – a process that continued for several decades. Finally, during the drought years of the 1930s, the federal government passed the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, bringing the era of unrestricted grazing on public lands to an end. To develop a scientific basis for improving management of Great Basin cold deserts, the federal government turned to research from the Desert Experimental Range.

More Than 80 Years of Agricultural Research

Starting in the 1930s, long-term grazing experiments on the Desert Experimental Range examined the economic and ecological impacts of sheep grazing using different management practices. These studies have continued to the present, with only minor alterations over the years. In addition, research was broadened to include the evolution and ecology of several of the plant species adapted to the harsh environment. Desert animals are also subjects of research, with a focus on various rodents, pronghorn antelope, kit fox and American kestrels. In recent years, research has focused on the effects of invasive species and climate extremes on plant community stability. Today, the Desert Experimental Range continues as an important site for research and education in the ecology and management of salt desert ecosystems.

A Place Worth Preserving

The Desert Experimental Range is a relatively undisturbed site in a time when such areas are becoming much less common. As a federally designated research site, development here is

prohibited, which preserves natural resources and protects unique cultural resources such as ancient Native American petroglyphs. It is also used by educators and students of all ages as an outdoor classroom to explore strategies for effective stewardship and sustainable use of the region's natural resources.

Visitors should be careful to not disturb vegetation, wildlife, cultural sites or artifacts, including petroglyphs, signage and abandoned vehicles. Please remain in designated areas and respect all research infrastructure, such as weather monitoring stations, camera traps, fences and plot markers.

Facilities at Desert Experimental Range

The Desert Experimental Range has an office, living quarters, support buildings, a well and 135 miles of fencing. Nearly all of these facilities were constructed during the Great Depression of the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a public work relief program.

Three of the buildings have running water, bathrooms and electricity. While there are no laboratory facilities, support structures include a generator house, garage, working areas, an automated weather station and a barn. Facilities can be reserved by contacting the Desert Experimental Range site administrator at 801-356-5100.

